



G000 The USPS and Mailing Standards

G090 Philatelic Services

Summary G090 describes the USPS standards governing postage stamps and postal stationery. It gives instructions on applying for special cancellations for publicizing events.

1.0 BASIC INFORMATION

Policy A single national USPS policy governs postage stamps and postal stationery, including their release, sale, and discontinuance.

1.1

Stamp Subjects Subjects for commemorative postage stamps and postal stationery may be proposed by the public through correspondence to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (see [G043](#) for address). The Committee reviews suggestions and makes recommendations to the postmaster general, who makes the final selections.

1.2

Availability Stamps, postal stationery, and philatelic products are sold at various types of postal retail facilities. Post offices establish special temporary stations to provide philatelic services and to sell commemorative stamps and philatelic products at activities of significant public or philatelic interest. Temporary philatelic stations may be authorized by the postmaster. Under specific circumstances, the USPS may limit or set conditions on the purchase of stamps and other forms of postage or postal stationery.

1.3

Mail Orders Mail orders for postage stamps of selected quality and other philatelic items must be directed to Stamp Fulfillment Services. Post offices do not fill mail orders for stamps and other philatelic items other than orders under the stamps-by-mail program and for locally precanceled stamps. Customers must provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of precanceled stamps.

1.4

Postmarking Postmarking for philately is provided at the request of collectors or cover servicers for postmarking outside ordinary mail processing. The *Postal Operations Manual* contains USPS policy on philatelic postmarking, including cancellation devices, types of postmarks or cancellations, first day covers, postal cacheted envelopes, and service conditions.

1.5

2.0 SPECIAL CANCELLATIONS

Description Special cancellations are machine cancellations in which a caption publicizing an event is engraved on a die hub used to cancel mail. They may be used only in post offices with 190 or more revenue units for canceling large volumes of mail. Special cancellations are authorized only if the scheduled observance either is for a national purpose for which Congress has made an appropriation or is of general public interest and importance for a definite period and not conducted for private gain or profit.

2.1

Prohibitions Special cancellations are not authorized for events of interest primarily to a particular local group; fraternal, political, religious, service, commercial, or trade organizations; campaigns or events promoting the sale or use of private products or services; idea or slogan promotions not directly connected with an event of general public interest and importance; post office anniversaries; recruitment

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programs; or events that occur during a period when all canceling machines in the post office are scheduled for other special cancellation die hubs.

Application

2.3

A written application for a special cancellation die hub must be submitted to the postmaster at the post office where the special cancellation is to be used. The application must be submitted by the sponsor at least 4 months before the date the special cancellation is to be used. The application must provide this information:

- a. Complete description and schedule of the event to be observed; evidence that the event is not for private gain or profit; and the name, address, and telephone number of the sponsor to be billed for the cost of manufacturing the die hubs.
- b. The wording of the special cancellation, which must be standardized and approved by the sponsor's national headquarters when the sponsor is an affiliate or local chapter of a national organization. Standardized requests for national events must be forwarded to the manager of Mailing Standards (see [G043](#) for address.) *Space available for the wording is limited to three lines of not more than 20 letters, numbers, or spaces each. Illustrations or designs may not be used. The wording must directly reflect the event to be commemorated.*
- c. Post office name and telephone number where the cancellation is to be used, number of die hubs required, and the requested period of use.

Sponsor Payment

2.4

The sponsor must pay the cost of manufacturing the special cancellation die hub and any cost incurred for installing the hub or in adapting canceling machines for its use.

Time Limit on Use

2.5

Use of a special cancellation may not exceed 6 months. A special cancellation approved on an annual basis is limited to one 60-day period for each year. A request must be submitted for reuse of recurring annual cancellations 3 months before the date the sponsor wants the cancellation to be used again. For national cancellations, a single request from the national sponsor suffices.

Revocation

2.6

Use of any special cancellation may be curtailed or revoked when it is necessary to use special postmarking dies for USPS purposes.

After Use

2.7

Used die hubs may not be given to sponsors or transferred to another post office. A request from the sponsor that a special cancellation die hub be kept for an appropriate purpose (e.g., placement in a museum, library, or historical site) may be approved by the manager of Mailing Standards (see [G043](#) for address).

Information

2.8

More information about special cancellations is in the *Postal Operations Manual*.

Mail Submitted for Special Cancellations

2.9

A mailer must affix First-Class postage to mail that the mailer wants canceled with a special cancellation. The mail must bear a complete address. Stamps issued by foreign countries are not permitted on the mail. Mail bearing the special cancellation will not be enclosed in another envelope for return even if a postage-paid envelope is provided by the customer. Damaged envelopes canceled with a special cancellation are not replaced.